

CROHN DISEASE

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Clues in Cultures of Blood Specimens

THERE ARE CLUES that one can use as to what type of blood specimen culture to take in a patient. The age of a patient may give you a clue as to what organisms to suspect. Certainly a newborn infant has a different kind of flora that causes infection and disease than does a child or an older patient. In newborns there are two organisms that are responsible for almost all of the serious infections—the enteric Gram-negatives, with *Escherichia coli* being the most common, and then the streptococci—so that you could predict pretty well what kind of organism you might find in a newborn suspected of having sepsis. It becomes a little more difficult as the child grows older. Children are likely to be infected with a wider variety of organisms and certainly adults are affected with an even wider variety. But one also has additional clues. Is the patient in the hospital or is he coming in from the outside? The patient who is in the hospital is exposed to organisms which you know are going to be common organisms associated with infection in the intensive care unit—the pseudomonades, the enterobacteria—those organisms which because of the hospital environment have the opportunity to get into the patient. And then, of course, the history of the patient is important: Are you dealing with a patient who has a chronic underlying disease and therefore is susceptible to a group of organisms that may require a different type of cultural technique for identification? Is there a skin rash that could give you a clue as to what type of organisms you might be dealing with in a systemic infection? In any case, there are two or three additional things that might be used as clues to a bacterial infection.

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